**In the Claims:**

1.    (Currently amended) A method of automatically providing server affinities for related concurrent connection requests in networking environments which perform workload balancing, comprising ~~steps of~~:

selectively activating an affinity for a particular server application <u>based on an activation message from the particular server application</u>;

routing a first connection request to the particular server application from a selected source; and

bypassing normal workload balancing operations, responsive to the selective activation, for subsequent concurrent connection requests for the particular server application from the selected source while at least one such concurrent connection request remains active.

2.    (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selected source is a selected client.

3.    (Original) The method according to Claim 2, wherein the selected client is identified by its Internet Protocol ("IP") address.

4.    (Original) The method according to Claim 2, wherein the selected client is identified by its Internet Protocol ("IP") address and port number.

5.    (Currently amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein ~~the step of~~ selectively activating further comprises ~~the step of~~ detecting an automatic affinity activation parameter ~~on~~ <u>in</u> a configuration statement for the particular server application.

6.    (Currently amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the bypassing step causes the subsequent connection request messages from the selected source to be routed to an instance of the particular server application which is processing the first connection request.


7.    (Currently amended) A method of automatically routing related concurrent connection requests in a networking environment which performs workload balancing, comprising steps of:

storing information for one or more automatic affinities, responsive to receiving a selective activation message from each of one or more server applications having the one or more affinities;

receiving incoming connection requests from client applications; and

routing each received connection request to a particular one of the server applications, further comprising steps of:

selecting the particular one of the server applications using the stored information for automatic affinities, when the client application sending the received connection request is identified in the stored information as having an existing connection to the particular one of the server applications and wherein one of the selective activation messages has been received from the particular one of the server applications; and

selecting the particular one of the server applications using workload balancing otherwise when the client application sending the received connection request is not identified in the stored information as having an existing connection to the particular one of the server applications and wherein one of the selective activation messages has not been received from the particular one of the server applications.

8.      (Currently amended) The method according to Claim 7, wherein the client application is identified as having one of the existing connections with the particular one of the server applications if a destination address and destination port, as well as a source address and optionally a source port number, of the connection request being routed match the stored information.

9.      (Currently amended) A system for automatically providing server affinities for related concurrent connection requests in networking environments which perform workload balancing, comprising:

means for selectively activating an affinity for a particular server application based on an activation message from the particular server application;

means for routing a first connection request to the particular server application from a selected source; and

means for bypassing normal workload balancing operations, responsive to the selective activation, for subsequent concurrent connection requests for the particular server application from the selected source while at least one such concurrent connection request remains active.

10.     (Original) The system according to Claim 9, wherein the selected source is a selected client.

11.     (Original) The system according to Claim 10, wherein the selected client is identified by its Internet Protocol ("IP") address.

12.    (Original) The system according to Claim 10, wherein the selected client is identified by its Internet Protocol ("IP") address and port number.

13.    (Currently amended) The system according to Claim 9, wherein the means for selectively activating further comprises means for detecting an automatic affinity activation parameter ~~on~~ in a configuration statement for the particular server application.

14.    (Original) The system according to Claim 9, wherein the means for bypassing causes the subsequent connection request messages from the selected source to be routed to an instance of the particular server application which is processing the first connection request.

15.    (Currently amended) A system for automatically routing related concurrent connection requests in a networking environment which performs workload balancing, comprising:

means for storing information for one or more automatic affinities, responsive to receiving a selective activation message from ~~each of~~ one or more server applications having the one or more affinities;

means for receiving incoming connection requests from client applications; and

means for routing each received connection request to a particular one of the server applications, further comprising:

means for ~~electing~~ selecting the particular one of the server applications using the stored information for automatic affinities, when the client application sending the

received connection request is identified in the stored information as having an existing

connection to the particular one <u>of the server applications</u> and wherein one of the selective

activation messages has been received from the particular one <u>of the server applications</u>; and

means for selecting the particular one of the server applications using

workload balancing ~~otherwise~~ <u>when the client application sending the received connection</u>

<u>request is not identified in the stored information as having an existing connection to the</u>

<u>particular one of the server applications and wherein one of the selective activation messages</u>

<u>has not been received from the particular one of the server applications</u>.


16.     (Currently amended) The system according to Claim 15, wherein the client

application is identified as having one of the existing connections with the particular one <u>of</u>

<u>the server applications</u> if a destination address and destination port, as well as a source

address and optionally a source port number, of the connection request being routed match

the stored information.


17.     (Currently amended) A computer program product for automatically providing

server affinities for related concurrent connection requests in networking environments which

perform workload balancing, the computer program product embodied on one or more

computer readable media and comprising:

computer readable program code ~~means for selectively activating~~ <u>that is configured to</u>

<u>selectively activate</u> an affinity for a particular server application <u>based on an activation</u>

<u>message from the particular server application</u>;

computer readable program code ~~means for routing~~ <u>that is configured to route</u> a first

connection request to the particular server application from a selected source; and

computer readable program code ~~means for bypassing~~ <u>that is configured to bypass</u>

normal workload balancing operations, responsive to the selective activation, for subsequent

concurrent connection requests for the particular server application from the selected source

while at least one such concurrent connection request remains active.

18.     (Original) The computer program product according to Claim 17, wherein the

selected source is a selected client.

19.     (Original) The computer program product according to Claim 18, wherein the

selected client is identified by its Internet Protocol ("IP") address.

20.     (Original) The computer program product according to Claim 18, wherein the

selected client is identified by its Internet Protocol ("IP") address and port number.

21.     (Currently amended) The computer program product according to Claim 17,

wherein the computer readable program code ~~means for selectively activating~~ <u>that is</u>

<u>configured to selectively activate</u> further comprises computer readable program code ~~means~~

~~for detecting~~ <u>that is configured to detect</u> an automatic affinity activation parameter ~~on~~ <u>in</u> a

configuration statement for the particular server application.

22.     (Currently amended) The computer program product according to Claim 17,

wherein the computer readable program code ~~means for bypassing~~ <u>that is configured to</u>

<u>bypass</u> causes the subsequent connection request messages from the selected source to be

routed to an instance of the particular server application which is processing the first

connection request.

23.     (Currently amended) A computer program product for automatically routing

related concurrent connection requests in a networking environment which performs

workload balancing, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer

readable media and comprising:

computer readable program code ~~means for storing~~ that is configured to store

information for one or more automatic affinities, responsive to receiving a selective

activation message from ~~each of~~ one or more server applications having the one or more

affinities;

computer readable program code ~~means for receiving~~ that is configured to receive

incoming connection requests from client applications; and

computer readable program code ~~means for routing~~ that is configured to route each

received connection request to a particular one of the server applications, further comprising:

computer readable program code ~~means for electing~~ that is configured to

select the particular one of the server applications using the stored information for automatic

affinities, when the client application sending the received connection request is identified in

the stored information as having an existing connection to the particular one of the server

applications and wherein one of the selective activation messages has been received from the

particular one of the server applications; and

computer readable program code ~~means for selecting~~ that is configured to

select the particular one of the server applications using workload balancing ~~otherwise~~ when

the client application sending the received connection request is not identified in the stored

information as having an existing connection to the particular one of the server applications

and wherein one of the selective activation messages has not been received from the

particular one of the server applications.

24. (Currently amended) The computer program product according to Claim 23,

wherein the client application is identified as having one of the existing connections with the

particular one of the server applications if a destination address and destination port, as well

as a source address and optionally a source port number, of the connection request being

routed match the stored information.